DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 067 570 CG 007 430

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TITLE Drug Abuse and the Gifted Child.
INSTITUTION Institute for Social Concerns, Oakland, Calif.
PUB DATE 72
NOTE 8p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Drug Abuse; *Drug Education; Exceptional (Atypical); *Gifted; Narcotics; Need Gratification; *Psychological Needs; Superior Students

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the gifted child in relation to drugs. The author proposes a curriculum for parents and educators who wish to take steps to guide the gifted child past the drug scene. Factors leading to drug abuse among the gifted were identified by teachers, counselors, and parents attending drug abuse workshops at the 1972 conference of the California Association for the Gifted (CAG). Suggestions are made in the paper for ways of providing challenging situations into which the same energies which lead to drug use can be channeled. The author stresses the importance of knowing the real needs of the gifted child, realizing that these do not include drugs. He also notes the importance of adults in dealing with drug abuse by serving as role models with a commitment and dedication to solving this problem. (WS/Author)

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DRUG ABUSE AND THE GIFTED CHILD

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Is the gifted child particularly vulnerable to drug abuse? Do his characteristics of curiosity, eagerness to discover and try new things, and learning mode as a risk-taker willing to take chances to find the answer make him a prime target? What are some of the facts about drug abuse, and how do they relate to the gifted child?

Drugs of choice are available -- but they always have been, in spite of accelerated government legislation toward control. In 1856, an American therapeutics text talked of enormous abuse of opium, and in 1868, Horace Day estimated that one for every 350 members of the total population were opium eaters. Few suggested that the habit was detrimental on any significant scale to life, health, or morals. But the growing moral fervor of temperance movements, synthesis of morphine, introduction of the steel hypodermic needle, and wide availability and advertising of opium-laced patent medicines all combined to alter a balance that had endured throughout the world for centuries. On May 11, 1915, the long U.S. government effort toward control began with Treasury Decision 2200, which abruptly announced that doctors' prescriptions of narcotics for addicts must show decreasing doses over time, or else they would be presumed to be violating the law. Continued national effort at legal control of narcotics addiction has not affected the vastly increased range in kinds and uses of drugs.

Youth in general, including gifted children, are experimenting with -- and becoming dependent upon -- drugs in frightening numbers. Why? Rebellion, hostility, pressure/escape, self-exploration, reli-

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gion, curiosity, conformity, kicks, and creativity are common reasons given for drug abuse in general. A California school district reported at the 1972 conference of the California Personnel and Guidance Association that studies leading to their drug abuse program pinpointed the following five causes of drug abuse by children: 1) peer group influence; 2) low self-confidence; 3) risk-taking, curiosity, thrill-seeking; 4) conflict with adult society, and 5) advertising and the impact of the mass media.

Some similar factors leading to drug abuse among the gifted were identified by teachers, counselors, and parents of gifted children attending drug abuse workshops at the 1972 conference of the California Association for the Gifted (CAG). See the chart below:

WORKSHOP I	WORKSHOP II
Boredom, frustration Curiosity/need for self-identity and models Peer pressure Physiological/Chemical Misdirected needs Need for problem-solving skills	Intellectual- Curiosity, seeking answers, spiritual needs Psychological- Social pressures, rebellion, escape, loneliness, peer influence, self-concept, insecurity Physiological- Bio-chemical needs, habituation

All human beings and youth in general have dissatisfactions and tensions which generate needs. Drugs offer instant solutions. One schematized analysis of the relationship between feelings and needs has been offered by David Schwartz, M.D., as follows:

Feelings.....Needs	
Anger	Release or Control
Impotence	Power
Boredom	Stimulation
Dependency	Interdependency
Loneliness	Intimacy
Impermanence	Hope or Faith

Drugs do indeed offer solutions to needs generated by these feelings. For example, the young person who uses marijuana gets release from his feelings of anger when he is high. His feelings of impotence give way to a sense of power by choosing to go against society's rules and breaking the law. His boredom becomes stimulation, his dependency becomes an interdependency and intimacy with others in the drug scene, and while he is high he has faith and hope for the impossible. If, in fact, youth is characterized by certain feelings of dissatisfaction and tension which generate needs, then drugs satisfy the needs by offering instant external solutions to internal tension. They do so in a way in which traditional social systems are no longer able to completely serve.

Three important aspects of drug abuse are set, setting, and dosage. Set refers to the mental state which the youth takes into the drug-using situation. His depression, euphoria, expectancies have much to do with the drug's effect upon him. Some research has indicated that the drug"high" is a learned response, perhaps explaining the variation in reports of initial experiences with marijuana,

for example. The setting -- whether at ease among friends with no pressure, or in strange surroundings such as a psychedelic concert with flashing lights and loud driving music -- also affects his response. These are mental and physical considerations, but dosage is a medical concern. How much? What drug? Strength, purity, and misrepresentation by the dealer must be considered, too. A recent survey of a college in the Midwest asked students to rate drugs on a continuum from least harmful to most harmful. They rated marijuana least harmful, with mescaline second, and heroin most harmful, with LSD next to the worst. This is a fairly widespread conception and pushers are well aware of it. In the last three years, laboratory testing reveals, no mescaline has been sold on the streets of San Francisco. Kids have been buying what they thought was mescaline -- but was really LSD.

Recent legislation and new government programs have attempted to humanize the fight against drug abuse. Highly vocal groups agree or disagree with claims that many drug abuse laws are outmoded or punitive. But from the wasteland of drug abuse some prescriptions have come which may help turn the gifted child and other youth away from drugs. These include:

Drug Education:

This does not mean the oldfashioned kind, with scare tactics that young people ignore or laugh at, but innovative methods utilizing the techniques and visual-auditory-kinesthetic materials developed by research into learning modes. If the goals of this education are to be information, insight into one's own attitudes, and skills, then the techniques to be used are:

* Didactic

--- Pharmacological information about drugs in relation to religion, sports, the arts, etc.

--- Presentation on crisis intervention, symptoms of drug abuse, and social causes and effects.

--- Communications with abusers and their cultural networks, referral agencies and methods of establishing cooperation.

* Experiential

--- Field trips to different types of drug abuse centers, state hospitals, Veteran's Administration facilities, drop-in centers, to help in finding parts of the community they can relate to.

* Group Process

--- Interacting with peer groups, finding models, using techniques, such as "reduction of agendas" in which each member of a group is asked to jot down his own idea of the three-to-five most important factors related to a subject of mutual interest; then the group breaks into dyads who must negotiate their points and come to an agreement on one list of the three-to-five points; then they move to groups of four or eight, negotiating each time their group gets larger; ending with one representative of the two halves of the total group having to negotiate five points for their groups outside the room, away from group pressure. This process illustrates the thesis-antithesis-synthesis method of arriving at common goals used by many authors, including Huey P. Newton in some of his earlier writings.

Provision of Alternatives

--- To meet the needs of individuals.

--- To give positive outlets for power, aggression, and intimacy.

--- To provide after school parent and peer groups whom they can trust.

Individualization of Curricula

--- To provide for some success for every student.

If curiosity about and tendencies toward drug experimentation are inevitable because of our times, advertising exposure, culture push, and myriad other reasons, we must provide a challenging situation into which the same fantastic energies which lead to drug use can be channeled. We must also find out what our gifted children's real needs are, knowing that these do not include drugs. And in dealing with the tragedy of drug abuse, we must realize that we are the answer, in terms of role models, our own personal commitment, and our dedication to solving this problem.

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SUGGESTED BASIC LIBRARY

Listed below are suggested books for a basic library on pharmacology and drugs, the many facets of group dynamics, and selected drug abuse films.

Pharmacology and Drugs

1. The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics
   -Goodman and Gilman

2. Undestanding Drug Use
   -Allan Y. Cohen

3. The New Prohibition
   -John Kaplan

4. A New Connection
   -John H. Frykman

5. The Making of the Counter Culture
   -Ted Roszak

6. The Hippie Trip
   -Lewis Yablonsky

7. Interim Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Non-Medical
   -Write Information, Ottawa, Canada

8. Marihuana and Health
   -A Report to Congress from the Secretary, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare

9. Department of Health and Social Security
   Reports on Public Health and Medical Subjects No. 124
   (Amphetamines, Barbiturates, LSD and Cannabis)
   -Her Majesty's Staionery Office, London, England

10. Students and Drugs
    Society and Drugs
    -Richard Blum

11. Drugs on the College Campus
    -Helen Nowlis

GROUPS

1. Encounter - Group Sensitivity Training Experience
   -Carl Goldberg (Overview of Groups)

2. Experience in Groups
   -W. R. Bion (Tavistock)

3. Learning for Leadership
   -A. K. Price (Tavistock)

4. The Process of the Basic Encounter Group
   -Karl Rogers (Encounter)

5. Psychodrama and Group Psychotherapy
   -J. C. Moreno

6. Joy: Expanding Human Awareness
   -William Schultz (Gestalt)

FILMS

1. A Day in the Death of Donny B.
   -National A.V. Center, National Institute of Mental Health

2. Drugs in the Tenderloin
   -NET Film Service

3. Drugs: The Children Are Choosing and Drugs in our Culture
   -University of California Extension Media Center
   (Series of seven films - most excellent)

4. Grooving
   -Benchmark Films

5. The Law: How Effective Is It?
   -NET Film Service

6. Rapping
   -Frith Films